

THE CHURCH BELL

DECEMBER 2017

The First Congregational Church Newsletter

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ
At 26 Central Street in West Boylston
online at www.fccwb.com

*The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth
from his holy Word.”*
~John Robinson, pastor to the Pilgrims



*“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*
~ Isaiah 9:6 NRSV

DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Worship and Church School at 10:15 a.m.
Childcare is available for all Sunday services.
Our pastors will be preaching.

December 3 ~ The First Sunday of Advent
The Sacrament of Holy Communion
Chancel Choir

December 10 ~ The Second Sunday of Advent
The Sacrament of Christian Baptism
Chancel Choir

4:00 p.m. All Church Caroling

December 17 ~ The Third Sunday of Advent
The Church School Pageant
Chancel Choir Chancel Ringers

December 24 ~ 10:15 a.m. The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24 ~ Christmas Eve
4:00 p.m. Concert Prelude
4:30 p.m. Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols
Chancel Choir Chancel Ringers

December 31 ~ The First Sunday after Christmas
Chancel Choir

Hurd in the Halls.....2

*Giving Tree
Caroling
Zentangle
Prayer and Praise
Blue Christmas Service.....3*

*Christian Outreach
IHN Holiday Wreath Sale
Church School News.....4*

*Adult Discussion Group
Second Chance Thrift Shop
WB Ecumenical Food Pantry.....5*

*2017 Contributions
2018 Pledges
Christmas Fund
2017 Annual Reports Deadline
Paint and Sip &
Chainsaw Massacre Photos.....6*

*Crossroads Youth Group
Faith Conversations
Church Register
Christmas Worship Schedule
Board of Church Life News
Inclement Weather.....7*

*“How long O Lord”?.....Insert
Poinsettia Order Form.....Insert*

*Birthdays
Church Staff /Address.....Back Page*

Hurd in the Halls.....

The season between Thanksgiving and the new year can be a difficult time for many people. Our minds may turn to regret, to things we have left undone or done poorly. We may think about those things that we lack, those people whom we have loved and lost, those opportunities that knocked but once. A period of reflection and introspection can bleed into isolation and even depression.

Yet, as Christians, we are given a gift in the middle of this season. Not simply the chance to gather with loved ones in church or around the dinner table, but the reminder of God's abiding presence on Earth and in our hearts and lives. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we celebrate morning the entrance of Jesus into our world. We remember his coming throughout the season of Advent.

But we do not only remember his arrival in Bethlehem two millennia ago, or should not. Though it is a cause for joy to remember the glorious moment that the shepherds heard the angels sing, this season is not only about the past. The season of Advent is also about the present, and even the future. We remember not only that Christ came to earth, but that his Holy Spirit remains with us, and that he will come again.

During these weeks, we hear the words of Isaiah and we listen to the preaching of John the Baptist. In those passages, we are called to prepare the way for the Lord. We are not called to wait for him. We are not called to look for him. We are called to prepare the way.

We prepare the way when we increase the amount of justice, mercy and love in God's creation. We prepare the way when we practice hospitality and kindness. We prepare the way when not only hear the words of the prophets and of Christ himself, but when we live them out with our hearts and hands and mouths. As we sing out Joy to the World, let us not simply sing it, but bring it, in Christ's name, until he comes again.

Blessings,
Chip



All gifts must be under the tree by Wednesday, December 6.

Bring the gifts unwrapped. Gift wrap and ribbon are welcomed. APW supports families in Worcester who have been affected by AIDS. gifts for their children. These are families who otherwise would not be able to afford gifts.

Thank you!



All Church Caroling December 10th 4-6 p.m.

We will sing carols to our homebound members, those who have experienced sadness in the last year and those in Nursing Homes. Then we will return to the church for hot chocolate, cookies and fellowship. The more of us who carol the better we sound. We usually divide into two or three groups and each group carols at several homes. Please join us as we spread some Christmas cheer.

Please call Allison Person at 508-829-0609 to say you'll join us! You'll be glad you did.

ZENTANGLE
(STRUCTURED DOODLING) CLASS
SUNDAY, JANUARY 28th
1:00-4:30 PM
Fellowship Hall
First Congregational Church
26 Church Street West Boylston, MA 01583

COME JOIN US FOR A FUN AND RELAXING INTRODUCTION TO ZENTANGLE, a method of creating beautiful images from repetitive patterns. Receive an art kit with supplies, instruction for eight different patterns, your two finished pieces of art, and enough materials to create other art work at home. The class is open to ages 12 and up and to all skill levels.

Cost is \$35. To register or for more information, please call Jody Barnard at (508) 835-6779. Feel free to bring a friend, and join us!

Prayer and Praise

All those with health concerns:

Jim Bronwell
Carol Rotti
Cayleigh Lynne Gilroy-granddaughter of Carol Ann Hamilton's friend
Lynne Pierce-Arlette and Bill Peterson's friend
Steven Small
Sophia Landeo
Ralph-Lori Rotti's brother
Ron Newman, Dan Newman's father
Bernadette White—one of our faithful Second Chance Thrift Shop stewards
Carolyn Small Plummer-Steven Small's sister
Daryn Gillies-Beverly Fisher's cousin
Lyle Smith
Margaret Borge
Jan Malcolmson
Paula Leftwich-Heidi Leftwich's mother-in-law
Tony-Sharon Seale's brother-in-law
David Holmes-Amie Dehner's step-father
Carol (Baker) Poladian-friend of Heather and Paul Krasnov
Kevin R. Brownell-Carol Ann Hamilton's nephew
Scott Holt
Debbie Thomas-Carol Rotti's cousin
Helen-Lauren Espe's friend
Bob Akins-Marsha Saunder's brother
Arlette Peterson
Andrew Brewer-Marie Lane's nephew
Ken Johnson-Arlette Peterson's father
Christie Hendrickson-Beverly Fisher's granddaughter



Wider concerns:

Thanksgiving for all who come through our doors. Our service men and women around the world and their families.
Those who are unemployed among us and around the country.

A Blue Christmas Service at Oakdale United Methodist Church

Thursday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m.

It's a time for people who are grieving losses or even just stressed out by the holiday season to gather and experience some quiet beauty, prayers for healing, and the promise of hope in Christ Jesus.



CHRISTIAN OUTREACH BOARD NEWS

Upcoming Events...

JOHN STREET SOUP KITCHEN

Our next opportunity to volunteer at the **John Street Soup Kitchen** will be: Saturday, January 6

We need:

- 30 lbs. of mashed potatoes in 5lb increments
- Desserts: 4 dozen squares or cookies
- **Deliver to our church kitchen by 8:30 a.m. on Saturday morning, January 6**
- People to help serve



Please contact Dave O'Brien at 508-835-8929 or dnbobrien@gmail.com for more information.

HOPE for HOUSING

PURCHASE GROCERY CARDS

CVS Stop & Shop Big Y Shaw's Hannaford

Build a Habit...Save a Home

Together, we can end family homelessness!

Food Cards are available for purchase each Sunday following worship.

Checks are accepted for payment

- You purchase food cards- value from \$10 - \$100
- You receive the full face value of the card you purchase.
- What you don't spend remains on your card for later use.
- The store donates 5% of what you spend to prevent family homelessness.



IHN HOLIDAY WREATHS FOR SALE

In the Spirit of the Season, Give your Support and Enjoy a Beautiful Holiday Wreath.

Our congregation will be selling Christmas Wreaths on behalf of the Interfaith Hospitality Network after Worship. The wreaths are \$25.00 each while supplies last (wreaths sold out quickly last year). Cash or check is accepted made out to IHN. Thank you!

Church School News



Please join us for the annual Christmas Pageant on Sunday December 17th.

We will have a rehearsal on Saturday December 16th at 9:30am. We will run thru the pageant and get the children comfortable in their roles.

Please have your child at church on Sunday at 9:30am, to get in costume and to assemble to process in.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at pjmdoon@msn.com

We will have no church school on the following dates: Sunday December 24th, and Sunday December 31st, we will be back in class on Sunday January 7th



We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Very Happy New Year, on behalf of the teachers and CE board.





Greetings and Merry Christmas from the Adult Discussion Group!

Our Wednesday night group has been very busy working with our Advent study from the Adam Hamilton DVD series entitled, "Faithful: Christmas through the eyes of Joseph." This has been a very valuable series because it has focused our attention on our responsibilities to God and to those around us. As people with multiple important responsibilities it is easy to lose sight of what is really valuable in life. When we reflect on what is really valuable, Hamilton draws our focus back to the ultimate value of the saving grace offered through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our final meeting that leads to our Christmas break will be on Wednesday December 6th. During that meeting the group will decide on a new study which will begin on Wednesday January 10th when we return from our break.

On behalf of the group, I wish a Merry Christmas to all as we move into the celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Blessings, George



Second Chance Thrift Shop

Will be closed for the holidays on
December 23, December 27
and December 30.

WB FOOD PANTRY

First Congregational Church partners with Oakdale United Methodist, Christ Lutheran and Our Lady of Good Council churches in West Boylston to host a Food Pantry. It is open from 1-4 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of every month. Donations of food and money are always welcome.



Please check all items for expiration dates as we have to discard any items that have expired.

Donations may be left in the blue bins in the ramp entrance. Thanks so much for your generosity.

This project was funded in part by a grant from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation.

***The January Bell Deadline is
Thursday, December 14.***

Send address changes to administrator@fccwb.com

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY THRU FRIDAY 9:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

TELEPHONE: 508-835-4462 FAX: 508-835-4463

OFFICE EMAIL: administrator@fccwb.com

WEBSITE: www.fccwb.com

Messages may be left on the church phone system for the staff at any time. Acting Senior Pastor **Wallace "Chip" Hurd** (ext. 101). Bookkeeper—**Cindy Testa** (ext. 103) Administrative Assistant—**Lisa Fisher** (ext. 100)

Staff Email addresses are:

Chip: whurd@fccwb.com

George: gvogel@charter.net

Financial Office: financial@fccwb.com

Christian Ed Office: pjmduon@msn.com

Community Nursery School: cnswb@fccwb.com



2017 Contributions

As we continue on through the fall and anticipate the holiday season, please think about your church. We are approaching the end of our budget year. Your pledges represent the income that allows us to continue to serve God.

In accordance with IRS regulations, we will accept contributions toward 2017 pledges through December 31, 2017. If you will be out of town, plan to mail any end of year donations so they are postmarked by the 31st.

~ Thank you.

Have You Returned

Your Pledge Card for 2018?

We are in the process of creating a budget for 2018 and in order to do so we need the help of all our members. Please return your pledge card to the church office so your gift can be calculated into the amount we will be able to anticipate from pledges for 2018. Pledged income is by far our largest source of income.

Envelopes are issued to those who requested them on their pledge card. If you would like envelopes and did not check the box, please contact Lisa Fisher in the church office, 508-835-4462 ext. 100.

Thank you for your faithfulness.



What is the Christmas Fund?

On Christmas Eve we receive an offering for retired United Church of Christ pastors and their spouses. This offering supplements the income of some of our retired pastors and/or their spouses who served our churches that were too small to pay the suggested amount into their pensions. It is one way we honor the service of these faithful servants of Christ. If you have ever enjoyed the ministry of a pastor anywhere, this is a way to honor them and those who hear and accept God's call to serve the church.

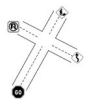
2017 ANNUAL REPORTS AND 2018 GOALS

DUE Tuesday, JANUARY 2nd

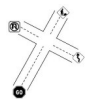
Paint and Sip at Heather's



"Chainsaw Massacre" - Dan and Paul



Crossroads

**Youth Group Schedule - Fall 2017**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
December 17	Sunday	6:00 - 8:00 PM	Christmas Party

Faith Conversations will meet every Sunday in December except the 24th and 31st.

Come join us at 9:00 a.m. in the chapel.

The Church Register***Deaths****James Adams**November 2**Deborah Gagne**November 4**Margaret Goodale**November 15***Christmas Worship Schedule****December 17 ~ The Third Sunday of Advent**

Church School Christmas Pageant at 10:15

Christmas Cookie Table during coffee hour
in Fellowship Hall**December 24 ~ The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Worship at 10:15

December 24 ~ Christmas Eve**4:00 p.m. Concert Prelude****4:30 p.m. A Candlelight Festival of Lessons and
Carols**

Chancel Choir Chancel Ringers

Each of these services is approximately one hour in length. If you are having family for Christmas please invite them to join us. They will be warmly welcomed.

News from the Board of Church Life

*whatever
YOU DO.
DO FOR LORD.*

SAVE THE DATE: December 10th at
4:00 PM All Church Christmas Caroling

We appreciate everyone who has answered our call for help and signed up to volunteer to serve and participate in one of our five services during Advent and the Christmas Season. There are still some open positions in our schedule if you would like to serve.

For the month of December, the following Board of Church Life members are the coordinator for each of these services: December 3 – Amie Dehner, December 10th – Trish Jones, December 17th – Carol Fisher-Crosby, December 24th 10:15 AM – Lisa Zendzian, December 24th 4:30 PM – Matt Rogers, December 31st – Terry Trask. Please contact the coordinator listed to confirm if you willing and able to serve on a certain date or service. We thank you for your help !

On Sunday, December 17th, following the Christmas Pageant, we will hold our annual “Christmas Cookie Table” in Fellowship Hall during coffee hour. We are asking for Donations of your favorite Christmas cookies for this special event. Thank you !

Again, thanks to all who serve our church in this way ! We appreciate all your help !

Matt Rogers
mmrogers232@gmail.com
508-963-0275



If the Weather Outside Is
Frightful

In the event of inclement weather please listen to
WSRS 96.1 FM or **WTAG 580 AM**
radio stations for church cancellations.
Or call the church answering machine that morning
for any cancellations!



Connecticut
Massachusetts
Rhode Island

Together, As One

Colleagues:

"How long O Lord?"

We live in a violent world where people kill each other. We live in a world where hate and injustice often seem to go unpunished. We live in a world where innocent victims are shot, or run over, or blown up by a pressure cooker. We have grown weary of the phrase, "Our thoughts and prayers" when we know that prayer is important but this madness calls for resolute action. We have seen statements made by our own church leaders that witness to their frustration by saying simply: "I don't know what to pray for or say right now." We feel helpless and afraid and angry with our nation's rhetoric and division around gun control and the embrace of hatred and violence and the lack of adequate mental health treatment in our communities. "How long O Lord" seems to be the right lament for the living of these days.

As leaders of our three Conferences we do not have easy answers or quick solutions. We feel the same frustration and anger that the cycle of violence in our country seems to never end. We do believe that the purpose for which we are joined together is to make this world more just, more loving and more compassionate. We do believe that our purpose is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We embrace the vision of the United Church of Christ that says, "United in Christ's love, a just world for all."

We weep with those who weep. We must work for change and address the systemic causes of violence in our world. We must call on our lawmakers to put into law sensible gun control and to provide stronger mental health resources. We must speak up against hatred and violence and xenophobia in all forms. We must not allow division and differences of opinion to divide us. We must speak the truth in love.

"How long, O Lord"

It's not the Lord's "fault" that we pose this question. The "how long" is how long will we be silent and thus complicit in the hate and violence that now engulfs our country.

"If not us, who? If not now, when?"

We are stronger together. Let us strengthen our resolve to love and action.

The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Minister & President, Massachusetts Conference
The Rev. Barbara Libby, Interim Conference Minister, Rhode Island Conference
The Rev. Kent Siladi, Conference Minister, Connecticut Conference



Christmas Memorial Poinsettias

Please fill in the form below and return it to the Church Office on or before
Monday, December 11. Each plant is \$12.50.

PLEASE... Please make out a separate check for the poinsettias to
First Congregational Church
do not include any other payment to the church. Mark the memo line "POINSETTIA"

THE BOARD OF CHURCH LIFE WOULD WELCOME YOUR GIFT OF A PLANT
AND/OR YOUR ASSISTANCE DELIVERING THEM TO OUR MEMBERS.

MEMORIAL POINSETTIAS

Please list **(PRINT)** my Memorial Flowers in the bulletin as follows:

Given to the Glory of God:

in memory of _____ **OR**

in celebration of _____ .

() I will leave my plant for Board of Church Life to distribute.

() I will take my plant after the 4:30 p.m.. worship service on Christmas Eve, December 24th.

(Requests for a specific delivery cannot be honored.)

Given By: _____

No. of plants _____ Amount Enclosed: _____ (\$12.50 per plant)

**NOTE: Plants are available to take after the 4:30 p.m. service on
Christmas Eve, December 24th.**

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
26 CENTRAL STREET, WEST BOYLSTON, MA 01583-1600

The Reverend Wallace A. Hurd IV, Acting Senior Pastor
The Reverend George E. Vogel, Associate Pastor Emeritus
William E. Nierintz, Ch.M., Minister of Music Emeritus
Cindy Testa, Bookkeeper

Kristjon Imperio, Minister of Music
Lisa A. Fisher, Administrative Assistant, Editor
Kendrik Imperio, Custodian
Heidi Pisano, Community Nursery School Director

The Reverend Steven A. Small, Senior Pastor is on medical leave.

PHONE: 508-835-4462

FAX: 508-835-4463

EMAIL: administrator@fccwb.com

WEBSITE: www.fccwb.com



01 Kirsi Montalvo
 05 Andrew Fraser
 05 Luke Trask
 07 Rita Alfson
 07 Melda Schonborg
 07 Elizabeth Shaw
 07 Tyler Smith
 08 Curtis Hayward
 09 Doris Johnson
 12 Allyson Shaw
 13 Marsha Saunders
 19 Eleanor Adams

22 Lyle Smith
 24 Margaret Borge
 25 Christopher Franger
 26 Katherine Borge
 27 Kathleen Wahl
 28 Benjamin Coviello
 29 John Gray
 30 Alvin Barakian
 30 Kevin Bjorklund
 30 Jeanne Borge
 31 Beverly Fisher